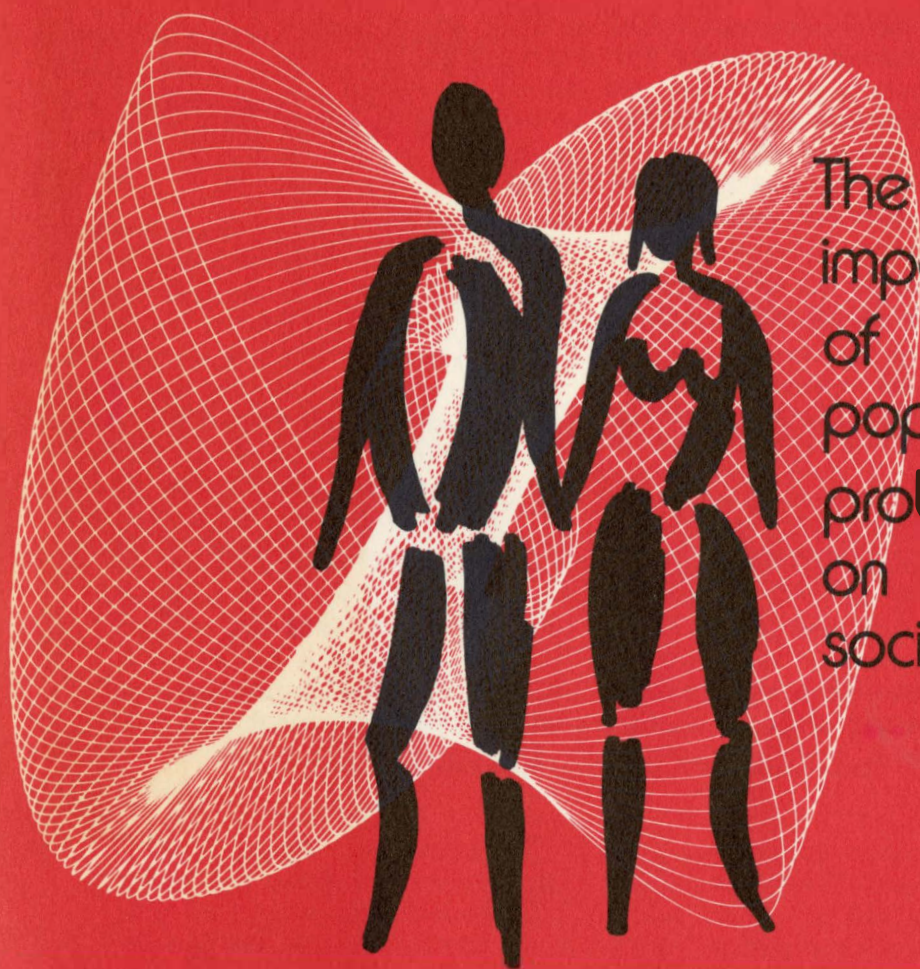


BRAZIL:

Population, Development, and the Dream of Greatness



The
impact
of
population
problems
on
society

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**BRAZIL: POPULATION, DEVELOPMENT,
AND THE DREAM OF GREATNESS**

by Thomas G. Sanders

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Early in the 1970s the population of Brazil will reach 100 million and before the end of this century exceed 200 million. Brazil will emerge as one of the world's major nations, in population as well as size. Its annual rate of population increase, which was approximately 3 per cent between 1950 and 1960, and 2.7 per cent between 1960 and 1970, will strain severely the resources available for the investments in production, education, health, and jobs which are also prerequisites for Brazil to become a significant nation.

Many outsiders do not realize the size of Brazil, which is the fifth largest country in the world and larger than the United States excluding Alaska. Its interior is not, as some think, a "green inferno." Huge states like Minas Gerais, Goiás, and Mato Grosso, each larger than several European countries combined, are predominantly rolling upland plains called *planalto*, with similarities to parts of the American Midwest. Even in the Amazon basin large contingents of people live an urban existence, some of them enjoying modern conveniences. In 1970, the city of Belém, near the mouth of the Amazon, was a metropolis of 642,514 people, while Manaus, nearly a thousand miles up the river, had 303,155. Much of Brazil is habitable. People go where economic opportunities appear and communications are established, though obviously some parts of the country are more exploitable than others.

Since colonial times these vast spaces troubled policy makers. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century tiny Portugal was a proud commercial power with an Empire that stretched along Africa to the Far East and included most of the Eastern Coast of South America. It acquired this Empire by its maritime innovations and the courage with which its people countered the

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threats of other nations, though with a small population it became weakened in the effort to maintain its discoveries. The colonial epoch was marked by conflicts with Spain, France, and Holland for possession of Brazil. One of Portugal's constant preoccupations was to settle this territory, not only to take advantage of its products like sugar, gold, and diamonds, but to prevent other countries from claiming or seizing it.

Although the colonial economic cycles attracted a limited number of Portuguese, Brazil became "portuguesized" in language, culture, and political loyalties because of the readiness of the colonists to reproduce with Indians and Africans, thus increasing the population under their influence. The Indian population of what is now Brazil was small and insufficient for even the limited economic activities of the period. Until the middle of the nineteenth century the chief source of population was Africa, and the economy of Brazil was built on slave labor. Accounts of visitors to Brazil and early estimates or censuses suggest that Blacks constituted a much larger percentage of the population than they do now.

In Brazilian historical lore, no figures stand out with greater distinction than the adventurers called *Bandeirantes*, who are associated with the exploration and settlement of the interior. Predominantly White-Indian *mestiços* from the region of São Paulo, the *Bandeirantes* penetrated into areas that are now part of Minas Gerais, Goiás, and Mato Grosso, exploring, hunting for gold, establishing settlements, and usually traveling with large numbers of Indian women, by whom they bore numerous progeny. Through their efforts, in the eighteenth century Cuiabá, the present capital of Mato Grosso, was an important mining town, though it was located months of arduous travel from the coastal centers. Thanks to the *Bandeirantes*, the Portuguese succeeded in claiming far greater areas of South America than the original Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) allotted them.

In the North the Amazon River offered a natural avenue into the heart of the Continent, which a few adventurous individuals, often priests interested in converting and organizing the Indians, traveled and settled.

With independence, the decline of the slave trade, and the development of the coffee cycle in the nineteenth century, Brazil turned to immigration to slake its thirst for manpower. By the latter part of the century Brazil was considered one of the leading objectives of European migration. The peak occurred in the decade from 1891 to 1900, when 1,125,000 foreigners entered. The impact of this new wave is clear if one realizes that the country's entire population in 1900 was slightly less than 18,000,000. The immigrants included not only southern Europeans like Portuguese, Italians, and Spaniards, but during the twentieth century new nationalities like Germans, Russians, Poles, Lebanese, and Japanese.

It is thus incorrect to assume that Brazilians have no awareness of population as a problem. Public opinion was always concerned with population, namely, the lack of it. Among other countries of continental dimensions, the Soviet Union, China, India, the United States, all have more people. Only Canada and Australia have less, and Brazilians would undoubtedly sympathize with their desire to increase it.

POPULATION PROFILE

Brazil is typical of most other Latin American countries in having entered a stage of reduced mortality resulting from medical and sanitary advances without a corresponding decline in the birthrate. Only 30 years ago, Brazil's population was increasing at less than 2 per cent annually, as the death rate hovered around 25/1000 while the birthrate was about 44. During the forties and fifties public campaigns against transmittable diseases achieved dramatic results. The former figures dropped to a little over ten and life expectancy increased to a 1964 estimate of 54.2 years. The birthrate, however, declined only slightly, to 41. The gap between these two sets of data provided nearly all of the 3 per cent increase, since migration, which was important as a population increment before 1934, is now negligible.

Continued high fertility and reduction of infant and child mortality have made Brazil a country of dependent youth: approximately 42 per cent of the population is 14 years old or under. This index of dependence introduces additional burdens on heads of households and on society, which are called upon to invest in the future of their young people. Brazil's population pyramid, unlike that of developed countries, is perfectly proportional, with the largest number of individuals in the lowest age group and declining gradually ascending upward in age.

The women of Brazil continue to have high rates of fertility despite "modernizing" processes that might be expected to lead to reductions. Previous census figures show that women in cities produce about two-thirds as many children as those in rural areas, and Brazil is rapidly urbanizing. Likewise, educational levels are improving, and there seems to be a clear inverse relationship between years of education and fertility. States with a substantial urban population and relatively high standards of education, like Guanabara, São Paulo, and Rio Grande do Sul, have markedly lower birthrates than predominantly rural northeastern states like Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Ceará, and Pernambuco. Nevertheless, the "modern" segment of the population continues to be a minority. Most Brazilians are poor and whether they

live in the country, in provincial towns, or in the lower class areas of the cities, they have very low levels of education and lack means of information for determining the number of children they will have.

Mortality rates and causes of death vary in different parts of the country. Official data, which depend on civil registers, are not reliable indicators of mortality (or natality), but supplementary studies of the capital cities of various states reveal sharp discrepancies. Rio de Janeiro has an infant mortality rate of 65.3/1000 and São Paulo 75.1, whereas Maceió and Teresina, capitals of the northeastern states of Alagoas and Piauí, have 213.6 and 246.3. The general mortality rate of São Paulo is 9.1/1000 and that of Maceió, 16.6. The states of Guanabara and São Paulo have a mortality rate of nine and an infant mortality figure of 75, while the northeastern region offers a contrasting 18 and 176.

In cities like São Paulo, the chief causes of death are those common to developed countries, diseases of the circulatory system and cancer, but in most of the northeastern capitals, they are digestive disorders, infections, and malnutrition which take a heavy toll of children. The southeastern region, with the major industrial cities of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Belo Horizonte, has 69.1 per cent of the doctors and 44 per cent of the nation's population, while the Northeast, with 30 per cent of the population, has only 13.5 per cent of the doctors. In both regions medical personnel are heavily concentrated in the cities. The Southeast also has 56.2 per cent of the nation's hospital beds, the Northeast, 15.6 per cent.

The contrasts between cities, states, and regions indicate that the lower the level of income and availability of medical personnel and facilities, the higher will be the rates of mortality and the shorter the life span. We may consequently assume that many rural areas of Brazil have higher indices of mortality and infant mortality than the capitals of the northeastern states.

Estimates of future trends in Brazilian population characteristics involve guesswork because of deficiencies in statistics.¹ Information on births, marriages, and deaths in Brazil is drawn, theoretically, from the civil register.



1. Brazil long had a tradition of sophistication in demographic analysis because of the influence of Dr. Giorgio Mortara, director of the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, and the censuses of 1940 and 1950 were considered the most accurate in Latin America. The census of 1960, however, dropped sharply in quality and was never fully tabulated, so that many projections continue to rely on the 1940 and 1950 data. The census of 1970, which is now being tabulated, represents a return to the former standard and will be helpful in remedying our present lack of information.



Ten years after its completion, the Belém-Brasília highway has affected profoundly the region it traverses, including the stimulation of population movement from the crowded littoral to the midwestern frontier. Trucks carrying cattle to market are a common sight along the highway (upper). A vendor of pots and pans plies his trade (left) and competes for space on the road with both man and beast at Estreito, where the Belém-Brasília and the Transamazonian highways will meet.



While this functions well in the more urban and developed regions, it is estimated that in some states of the North, less than 10 per cent of births are recorded, the figures on death being somewhat better. Given these deficiencies, demographers are inclined to use the census data for their estimates.

Determination of urban-rural population composition is hampered by the use of an administrative rather than numerical determination of urban centers. Within each *município* (geographical township), the *sede* (administrative center) and *vilas* (small towns) are classified as urban and the rest of the area rural. Since many of these urban centers have populations smaller than common international urban criteria (generally 2500 inhabitants), it is believed that the urban population of Brazil is overestimated.

Color is another commonly cited characteristic of the Brazilian population whose validity is questionable. Brazil is probably the world's leading racial melting pot, absorbing Africans, American Indians, northern and southern Europeans, and in the twentieth century, Orientals, into a fusion based on a tradition of racial intermarriage. Many Brazilians have physical characteristics of three of these. Accurate determination of race is impeded by two cultural factors: (1) In Brazil race is based not simply on color, but on other features like hair and physical characteristics. (2) There is a bias in terms of attractiveness and prestige in favor of White characteristics so that individuals tend to identify themselves as lighter than they are. Thus a light mulatto is inclined to call himself White, and a Black may call himself a *moreno*. Brazilian racial data are based in recent censuses on self-identification within four categories: White, Black, Oriental, and *pardo* (mixed). In 1950, 61.8 per cent of those in the census called themselves White, a figure which is unquestionably an exaggeration.

A similar problem of self-definition exists in literacy, which is politically important because only literates can vote. In Brazil the criterion is ability to write one's name. Although by this standard illiteracy has steadily declined with each decade to less than 40 per cent of the population, this does not accurately define the capacity of the population to read and interpret the world around them. Educated people are clearly a minority concentrated in urban centers.

Urbanization

Despite the dubiousness of figures on urban-rural distribution of the population, the use of a consistent criterion shows Brazil to be in a process of rapid urbanization. In 1960 the population was estimated to be 54.1 per cent rural, but during the past decade Brazil made the transition to a predominantly urban country. From 1960 to 1970 annual urban population

growth was 4.6 per cent, while rural was 1.1 per cent. The expansion of major cities has been phenomenal. Greater São Paulo increased from 2,449,000 in 1950 to an estimate of over 8,000,000 in 1970, and Greater Rio more than doubled in the past 20 years. The fastest growing large city is Belo Horizonte, which was founded in the late nineteenth century, had 353,000 people in 1950, and today with its environs is calculated to have 1,728,000. The large urban centers have not been the only beneficiaries of this process. Historically an agrarian country, Brazil in 1960 had 72 cities with more than 100,000 people. Capitals of states like Fortaleza (Ceará) and Salvador (Bahia) are approaching a million inhabitants, while provincial cities like Campinas (São Paulo) and Campos (Rio de Janeiro) now have over 300,000.

Preliminary indications from the census of 1970 suggest that the large cities themselves have not reached the estimated projections and that part of the anticipated increase is going instead to "suburbs" where housing is cheaper and life more tranquil. Lower class suburbs of Rio de Janeiro, for example, are now major cities.

Migration

The expansion of population in the cities is not the result merely of natural increase but of internal migration. The origins of this movement of people lie in Brazil's backward rural sector, which is dominated by large-holdings (*latifundios*) and smallholdings (*minifundios*). Neither structure is capable of absorbing the large population increases in rural areas, which are also the centers of poverty, illiteracy, and disease. From the rural areas migrants tend to go first to provincial cities and state capitals, and often from there to urban agglomerations. The chief areas of expulsion have been the rural regions and small towns of Minas Gerais, Bahia, and the Northeast, especially the coastal zone (*mata*), where sugar culture traditionally dominated. Other important sources of migrants are the depressed agricultural states of Espirito Santo and Rio de Janeiro in the Southeast, and certain rural regions of Rio Grande do Sul in the South, where land is no longer available for the numerous progeny of families of Italian and German descent.

Seasonal migration and emigration in Brazil have been little studied. The best known cases of the former involve *sertanejos* from the interior of the Northeast and Bahia who harvest cash crops like sugar on the littoral. During 1970, hundreds of thousands of *sertanejos* were also participating in "work fronts," public works projects to provide income for victims of one of the Northeast's periodic droughts. The *sertanejo* is also known for his tendency to migrate to a southern city, work or try to get a job for several years, and



A "suburb" on the outskirts of Salvador, Bahia.

then return. As to external migration, Brazil has no statistics. There is considerable evidence, however, that Brazilians are encroaching on the thinly settled frontier areas of neighbors like Paraguay, where a major attraction has been the lack of coffee export taxes, and Bolivia.

POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Although Brazil has a large and growing population, many Brazilians are unaware of the high costs for jobs, education, and health that this entails and believe that it can be absorbed without difficulty. This view is encouraged by the nation's extensive natural resources, the long-time policy of importing labor, and, more recently, the high indices of economic growth. Brazil had a population density of only 8.3 inhabitants per square kilometer in 1960, with a range of over 3,000 in Guanabara to less than one in Amazonas.

Despite low productivity in relation to area cultivated and low levels of consumption, the country is self-sufficient in major food products except wheat. Its two major agricultural exports are coffee (the world's largest producer) and cotton. Many Brazilians, however, are poorly nourished

because of low levels of agricultural technology and purchasing power, the high cost of marketing products, and ignorance about nutrition. The bulk of potential agricultural land is scarcely utilized.

Brazil also has extensive mineral resources, especially iron, and including quartz, manganese, zinc, and aluminum. Coal and petroleum reserves are believed to be substantial, though their scope is undetermined. Great progress has occurred in recent decades in exploiting these natural resources, though difficulties of transportation and lack of energy and capital continue to limit potential.

Since World War II, industry has spearheaded the nation's development. The triangle defined by São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Belo Horizonte is the chief beneficiary of industrial growth, though attempts have been made to spread it to other regions, especially the Northeast, through fiscal incentives. The economic crisis of the early 1960s occurred largely because the country had reached a saturation point in substituting imports, and present government policy aims at diversifying exports, especially of manufactured goods (which now compose 12.3 per cent of all exports). Brazil is the largest industrial nation in Latin America. It produces all types of consumer and capital commodities, including automobiles, airplanes, and ocean-going vessels, and is currently establishing petrochemical complexes in São Paulo and Bahia. Government and foreign enterprises dominate heavy industry, but current economic policy seeks to strengthen the Brazilian private sector. Chief trading partners are, in order, the United States, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, England, and France.

In the decade of 1959-1969, the Brazilian economy grew at an annual rate of 5.9 per cent, but in 1968 the GNP increase was 8.5 per cent, in 1969, 9.0 per cent, and in 1970, about the same. The surface dynamism of the economy hides, however, certain human problems. One is the poor distribution of income, the most inequitable in Latin America. The upper one per cent of income earners receives 28.05 per cent of personal income, while the lower 90 per cent receives 46.51 per cent. Given a per capita income of \$350-\$400 a year, this relegates the majority of the population to bare subsistence.

The agricultural sector is expelling excess population. Work opportunities in industry, which supply the chief pull factor in internal migration and urbanization, have not kept pace with the influx of population. Current Brazilian industrial growth, being capital and technology intensive, has not significantly increased its percentage of employment so that services have had to expand to absorb the urban migrants.

The increase of population in the cities without compensatory employment has created large contingents of individuals living what is often called in Latin America a "marginal" existence. Although the most obvious sign has been the mushrooming squatter settlements (favelas), the underlying problem is a low income level and what seem to be substantial levels of underemployment. While official government figures on unemployment are modest (and dubious), not exceeding 3 per cent, underemployment statistics are not available. Brazil's cities also suffer from urban problems common to developed countries—like smog, inadequate transportation, health services, education, and sanitary facilities—but have limited resources to confront them.

POPULATION AND SOCIETY

The development of communications (especially the radio), highway construction, migration, and increased literacy suggest that even rural and backward Brazilians are undergoing changes in attitude. The act of leaving the countryside and moving to a city indicates a sharp break with the past, which will especially affect one's children. The industrialization of Brazil, by creating jobs in factories and expanding middle class positions in business and public administration, diversified the traditional class structure. Yet the persistent dualism of Brazilian society is reflected in two class structures, the traditional static one based on agrarian paternalism, and a modern urban one offering chances of upward mobility.

Analysis of social class and mobility in Brazil is hampered by disagreement over the definition of class and by lack of data. In 1950, one compilation indicated that 70 per cent of the population was in the lower class, 26 per cent in three categories of middle class, and 4 per cent in the upper class. A number of studies of social mobility undertaken a decade ago by Bertram Hutchinson showed that in six cities (operating with six class categories), two-fifths of the migrants stayed in the same class as their fathers, two-fifths assumed a higher status, and one-fifth a lower one. Individuals who immigrated from abroad were more likely to rise (48.6 per cent), as were those who originated from another large city (41.8 per cent).²



2. Bertram Hutchinson, "Urban Social Mobility Rates in Brazil Related to Migration and Changing Occupational Structure," *América Latina*, VI (julho-setembro de 1963), 47-61.

It has long been noted that immigrants played a disproportionate role in the economic development of São Paulo. Examining a sample in that city Hutchinson remarked that "the increase of industry in São Paulo is not only largely a result of intense foreign immigration; the economic development itself is a powerful force which continues to attract migrating movements from outside the Brazilian population."³ Hutchinson refers to Italians and their children whose "desire for individual realization is stronger than ordinary," but the same can be said for other ethnic groups which have made the South Brazil's most prosperous region: Germans, Japanese, Middle Easterners. The Hutchinson studies indicate, then, that urbanization and education do not automatically lead to social mobility, but that a factor of initiative is required as well.

Education

The failure of Brazil's educational system to respond to the demand for qualified personnel has long been cited as a major obstacle to the nation's development. Although progress has occurred, the statistics still do not reflect the modernity evident in such other areas as industry.

Education is deficient on all levels. Illiteracy declined from 65 per cent in 1920 to a government estimate in 1970 of 32.1 per cent (22.3 per cent in urban areas and 43.6 per cent in the countryside). Yet the growth in population has resulted in an increase in absolute numbers, so that today there are 16,500,000 illiterates over 14 years old. Moreover, as we have noted, many "literate" can write their name, but cannot read and write.

Brazil's educational pyramid reveals the loss of talent due to deficiencies in the schools resulting in failure of pupils, and the inability of families to maintain their children in the system. Of each 1,000 pupils who enter, only 395 pass to the second year, and a mere 181 complete primary education. Of these, 101 enter secondary school, and 35 finish. Although matriculations on the secondary level increased 238 per cent in the past decade, only 22 per cent of the population between 11 and 18 attend school. Brazil has a mere 400,000 university students (an increase of 301.4 per cent in ten years) out of a population of 95 million, and few of those who enter university come from the lower class.



3. Bertram Hutchinson, *Mobilidade e Trabalho* (Rio de Janeiro: Centro Brasileiro de Pesquisas Educacionais, 1960), p. 12.



The *sertão* is the back country of Brazil, especially the semiarid interior in several northeastern states, with spiny vegetation, sparse population, and a much-romanticized if harsh environment. Market scenes in two villages of the *sertão*.



Brazil's educational problems are legion. In 1967, only 3.5 per cent of national income was going to public education. Some 70 per cent of the schools have only one room, and a majority of the teachers do not meet the government qualifications to teach on the level that they do. Qualifying examinations (*vestibulares*), based on memorization, weed out candidates for secondary and university education. Private schools enroll 48 per cent of the pupils on the secondary level. Curricula and career selections of university students reflect traditional patterns of prestige rather than the development needs of the country.

While awareness of educational problems is growing, so that literacy training, strengthening of all levels of schooling, and development of technology are considered national priorities, governmental good will is undermined by the high proportion of youth in the population. Any effective solution will demand extensive public funds, reducing the amount of capital available to keep the economy growing at politically acceptable rates.

Further public resources are also required to produce healthy adults. Although advances were made in the forties and fifties in checking such diseases as malaria, tuberculosis, and typhoid fever, much remains to be done. Life expectancy continues low, especially in the poorer states, chiefly because half of deaths occur among children under five. Transmittable diseases are responsible for 40 per cent of deaths, and 90 per cent of these come from infectious diarrhea, grippe, pneumonia, tuberculosis, measles, and tetanus. While health standards are reasonably good in the more prosperous cities, where medical personnel and hospitals are concentrated, over 2,000 *municípios* do not even have a doctor. A substantial part of the population does not consult trained persons when they are sick.

Attitudes toward Family Planning

Brazil's response to population growth has always been conditioned by awareness of the lightly settled areas of the country and the desire for a large population to fill them, incorporate them into the rest of the country, guarantee national security, and promote the use of natural resources. Brazilians find themselves caught between the overlapping waves of two attitudes toward population, one associated with its past history, the other with its future. The former emphasizes expansion of population and uses terms like colonization, occupation of space, exploitation of resources, and national greatness through a sizable population. The other is centered on planned national development and is slowly beginning to incorporate the contribution of demography to the analysis of economics, urbanization, health, and the quality of human existence.

The development of a modern population policy in Brazil has as its major obstacle the prevalence of an already existent attitude: the desire for more people. In an analysis of Brazilian national aspirations, the historian José Honório Rodrigues calls occupation of the land "a national dream."

Legal policy favors a continued high birthrate: the Ministry of Labor gives a supplement to families with more than six children; and federal and state governments, as well as the National Social Security Institute, give employees bonuses for each new birth. Abortion and propaganda for contraception are illegal, but the prevalence of abortion makes the law unenforceable. Contraceptives are freely sold in pharmacies, though publicity about the negative effects of progesterone pills recently led to restriction of their sale to holders of prescriptions.

Articulate opinion in Brazil is deeply divided over family planning. Newspapers and magazines are publishing an ever-increasing number of articles and editorials on the population crisis, abortion, contraceptive methods, and public opinion on these matters.⁴ Almost any distinguished visitor to Brazil, be he statesman or rock music singer, is likely to be asked in press interviews his opinion on birth control.

In 1966 and 1967, family planners became the object of a hostile campaign charging them with "genocide," collusion with foreign powers against Brazilian interests, and undermining national morality. The chief pressure group involved was a small group of doctors, calling themselves the Association of Doctors of the State of Guanabara. At the request of the Minister of Health, the Federal Council of Medicine rendered a judgment entirely favorable to family planning, which contended that "no one . . . can deny the ethical legitimacy of voluntary regulation of fecundity, and the action of the doctor is not only a right but a moral obligation toward the individual and the collectivity." A parliamentary committee of inquiry also investigated the



4. The divergence may be illustrated by editorials from Rio de Janeiro's two most respected newspapers. According to *Jornal do Brasil* (May 9, 1967), "Our country constitutes one of the special cases in which the demographic explosion does not represent a problem. Recent experience shows that we are able to grow between 6 per cent and 7 per cent per year. With the population increasing at 3 per cent, this means an increment of product per inhabitant of 3 per cent to 4 per cent a year, a perfectly satisfactory rhythm." *Correio da Manhã* (Jan. 11, 1967), on the other hand, argues, "The government cannot remain indifferent to the problem. The State cannot, obviously, force the use of contraceptives or other methods of family planning . . . , but it can and must make these methods as accessible as various vaccines. It has the moral obligation to instruct the poor classes in the use of these remedies and facilitate their acquisition."

charges, but when confronted with the testimony of numerous specialists, did not undertake action. More prevalent than these organized attacks is a common ignorance, even among educated people, of the economic and social consequences of population growth and the assumption that it is unpatriotic to try to reduce the natural rate.

Although it is still politically advantageous to oppose family planning in some circles, the climate for individuals and groups to express themselves favorably and act is much more encouraging than in the past. The potentially most important elite group favoring an official policy of population control is economists, who have exceptional prestige and influence in Brazil's military-technocratic developmental model. Nearly all major economists, both within and outside the government, have publicly insisted that a more moderate rate of population growth will ease the burden of future social and economic development. The exception is the most important one, Minister of Finance Antônio Delfim Neto, who holds that the present economic growth rate can absorb the current population increase. A ten-year development plan drawn up in 1968 urged the "adoption of an adequate rate of population expansion that will allow the progressive utilization of the country's natural resources and the effective occupation of her territory."

Another important elite group predominantly favoring family planning on health grounds is gynecologists and obstetricians. Although there is sufficient divergency among them to prevent them from acting in unison, in key crises many have lent their prestige to family planning.

The officials of the Armed Forces are divided. It is important to recognize that they come from and live on the salaries of the middle class, an economic fact which represents a counterbalancing force to aspirations for a large population. Two major military men who have emphasized population as a problem are General Aurélio Lyra Tavares, head of the junta which assumed power on Costa e Silva's fatal illness, and Marshal Cordeiro de Farias, one of the chief leaders of the Revolution of 1964. The Escola Superior da Guerra (Higher War College) invites both advocates and opponents to present their position, and according to observers at these sessions, the debate afterwards indicated a majority sentiment in favor of family planning. The best known advocate of family planning in Brazil, the geographer and economist Glycon de Paiva, is a former president of the graduates of the Escola Superior da Guerra.

The Catholic Church, to which about 90 per cent of Brazilians belong, is ambivalent. The official position of the hierarchy is adherence to the norms outlined in *Humanae Vitae*, but in practice the Brazilian Church is probably

Humanae Vitae—Pope Paul's encyclical, issued in 1968, which contains the Catholic Church's official statement on theologically acceptable means of contraception.



Goiânia: The center of the city.

the most open to family planning of any in Latin America. Theologians, especially, have criticized the reasoning behind the Pope's position and offered justifications for limiting and spacing children as a personal decision. The moral teachings of the Church influence only a tiny minority of Brazilians, those who regularly attend mass and are acquainted with the official positions.

Public opinion also seems to favor family planning. In 1966 an inquiry in ten cities involving 3,000 interviews revealed that 92 per cent favored access of couples to information for deciding the number of children. A poll by the magazine, *Realidade*, in July 1970, which asked, "Do you think that Brazil should adopt an official policy of control of natality?" received affirmative answers from 54 per cent of those in the upper class, 62 per cent in the middle class, and 64 per cent in the lower class.

In urban areas limitation of births seems to be common. A study by the Latin American Center of Demography several years ago showed that 58.1 per cent of the women surveyed in Rio de Janeiro were using contraceptives, ranging from 42.5 per cent among those with no education to 74 per cent among those who had attended universities. As early as 1965, it was estimated that Brazil had over a million, and perhaps a million and a half, abortions a year. Family planning leaders estimate that in 1970, 3,250,000 women were using the pill.

The chief organization promoting family planning is a private institution, Bemfam (Brazilian Society of Family Welfare) which was founded in 1965 and is headed by Dr. Walter Rodrigues. Bemfam now has 60 clinics in various parts of the country, though it lays great emphasis on promotion of awareness about family planning through seminars on population problems and the training of medical and paramedical personnel. Bemfam has grown steadily, and currently has more requests for its services than its financial resources and personnel can meet. Perhaps the most encouraging aspect of Bemfam's operations is the willingness of municipal and state governments to provide facilities for family planning; the state of Espirito Santo, for example, has agreed to let Bemfam give contraceptive information in any of its health centers. Bemfam also has a number of its clinics in university hospitals. The organization is affiliated with and largely supported by the International Planned Parenthood Association, with the Ford Foundation assisting in research and evaluation. The lack of a public policy on population has not inhibited the expansion of private efforts like that of Bemfam. A small organization in São Paulo, the Family Orientation Service, also offers birth control information as part of its family counseling activities.

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Brazil is sometimes regarded as the world's leading demographic problem, a society careening toward 200 million people without a care or countervailing force. Such an image underestimates the modernity of the educated segment of Brazilian society, the influence of important individuals who with considerable courage advocate limiting population, and the realistic technicism which determines governmental decisions. The quality, seriousness, and quantity of public discussion is constantly improving; and Bemfam, although it is small in relation to the total population, has the support of many influential people.

Both family planners and sophisticated opponents like Minister Delfim Neto know that more clinics alone will not solve Brazil's population problem. A nation divided into a traditional and modern sector, with high levels of illiteracy and semiliteracy, and a substantial percentage of its people who never or hardly ever see a doctor, cannot control its population in a way that meets the needs of family well-being, economic betterment, and national aspirations. Only Brazil as a developed country—the common ground on which both supporters and opponents of family planning can meet—can

do that. Economic growth and education (as a key element in incorporating the masses) are more fundamental national priorities. At the same time, however, they are indispensable to effective family planning. An early official commitment to a program of population control, on the other hand, will gradually contribute to these national priorities. As higher standards of living and education contribute to a reduction of family size, availability of information on reduction of family size will lead to higher standards of living and education.



[Photographs page 5 by Thomas G. Sanders; photograph page 8 courtesy Desdemona Bardin; photographs page 12 courtesy *O Cruzeiro* (top) and George Coleman (bottom); photograph page 16 by James W. Rowe]

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Brazil presents an extreme example of national division between an educational and economic elite and a predominantly illiterate, economically depressed mass. Could a decreased birthrate begin to change this pattern? What other kinds of changes are also necessary?
2. A high birthrate, along with declining mortality and a predominantly youthful population, creates problems for a developing society. Discuss the effects of each on the provision of social services (hospitals, water and sewage systems, etc.), housing, employment, education, and agriculture.
3. Two popular Brazilian attitudes toward population problems contradict one another. One maintains that the country's resources are scarcely touched, and that Brazil needs a larger population to exploit its own riches and take its rightful place among the powerful nations of the world. In the other view, Brazil's high rate of population increase prevents the mass of the people from significantly improving their quality of life. Debate the two views.
4. The rapid urbanization of Brazil resulting from the attempts of peasants to better their economic and social position by finding industrial or service employment is creating unendurable strains for the whole society. Where should government planners place their priorities: opening up new lands for agricultural settlement and improving existing agricultural conditions and production, or providing urban amenities for the migrants?
5. As in Singapore and to some extent in Kenya, immigrants have played a disproportionate role in the economic development of Brazil. What qualities do such groups possess that contribute to their success?

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Thomas G. Sanders, who reports on several countries of Latin America, was formerly an Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Brown University. He received his A.B. in history from Duke University in 1952, and after studies at Union Theological Seminary in New York and the University of Copenhagen (as a Fulbright Scholar), he received his Ph.D. in religion from Columbia University in 1958. Dr. Sanders is the author of *Protestant Concepts of Church and State* and numerous articles on church-state theory and problems, and he contributed a chapter on Brazil to *Churches and States: The Religious Institution and Modernization*. In 1966 he became a Fellow of the Institute for Current World Affairs to work on various aspects of the relationship between Catholicism and development in Latin America. For the Field Staff he writes principally on Chile, Brazil, and Colombia.

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